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About the monthly Water Level bulletin

October Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term October average:

Great Lakes Basin	97%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	89%
Lake Superior	132%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	79%
Lake Ontario	96%

LEVEL news

Volume 7, Number 11 **November 8, 1999**

Water Supplies to the Great Lakes Remain Low in October

Water Levels Rise Above Chart Datum at Montréal Harbour

Water supplies to the Great Lakes were low again in October. The levels of all of the Great Lakes remain below average and, with the exception of Lakes Superior and Ontario, are much below their levels of a year ago. The levels of Lakes Michigan-Huron, St. Clair and Erie have not been lower at this time of year since the mid-1960s. Increased outflows from the Ottawa River and other tributaries caused the level of the St. Lawrence River at Montréal to rise significantly above chart datum in the latter half of October.

According to preliminary reports, Great Lakes basin precipitation for October was about 97% of average. Water supplies to all of the lakes were below average. The levels of Lakes Superior, Michigan-Huron and St. Clair declined by more than their usual amounts during October. The levels of Lakes Erie and Ontario declined by about their average rate in October. The levels of all of the Great Lakes are expected to decline in November unless water supplies are much greater than average.

At the beginning of November, Lake Superior's level was about 16 cm below its seasonal average, but about 12 cm above the level recorded last year. The level of Lakes Michigan-Huron was about 38 cm below its long-term average beginning of November level and about 40 cm below the level of one year ago. Lakes Michigan-Huron's level is now only about 10 cm above chart datum. The last time the level of Lakes Michigan-Huron was about this low at this time of year was in 1966.

The October rainfall on the Lake Ontario basin helped slow down the seasonal decline in the water level of the lake. At the beginning of November it was 15 cm below its seasonal average. Lake Erie's level is currently about 11 cm below average. Compared to one year ago, Lake Ontario is 2 cm higher while Lake Erie is 28 cm lower.

October rainfall on the St. Lawrence valley and the Ottawa River basin has brought considerable improvements to water level conditions for commercial navigation in the Montréal region. In response to the increased flow from the Ottawa River and other tributaries, the water levels in the St. Lawrence River in the Montréal area rose considerably during the last two weeks of October. Since October 14, the daily mean levels at the Port of Montréal have remained above chart datum, and at present the level at the harbour is about 57 cm above datum.

Note: These figures are preliminary.

October Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term October average:

Lake Superior	100%
Lake Erie	92%
Lake Huron	90%
Lake Ontario	89%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

IJC Announces Plan of Study to Review Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Regulation

The International Joint Commission (IJC) has released a Plan of Study describing in detail the work required to review the regulation of water levels and flows in Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.

On October 15, 1999 the IJC transmitted the Plan of Study to the Governments and requested the Governments' assistance in securing the resources needed to carry out the work. The work described in the Plan of Study is extensive and encompasses detailed technical studies, impact assessment and development of alternatives. Ongoing public consultation will be an important component. The entire effort is projected to cost $10.1 million (U.S.) plus $15.8 million (Canadian) and take five years to complete.

The IJC had previously prepared a Scope of Work describing in a more general fashion the work required to review the regulation of water levels and flows. It held numerous meetings to obtain public comment on the Scope of Work before providing it to the Governments of the United States and Canada in 1996.

Lakes Superior and Ontario Regulation

The outflow from Lake Superior averaged 2290 m^3/s in October, equal to the long-term average for the month. Outflow in November will be decreased to 2020 m^3/s, as specified by Plan 1977-A. This is less than the long-term average outflow for November.

The October outflow from Lake Ontario averaged 6170 m^3/s, about 11% below average for the month. The flow is expected to continue at a similar rate in November in accordance with Plan 1958-D.

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